

**This interview with  
CHUBBY CHECKER  
was conducted by the Library of Congress on  
October 30, 2015**



*Chubby Checker*

**LOC: Your version of “The Twist” followed a version by Hank Ballard and the Midnighters. Had you heard the earlier version before you were asked to record/perform it?**

CC: Yes, I heard “The Twist” by Hank Ballard and The Midnighters many times on the radio. I saw them perform the song at the Uptown Theater on Broad Street in Philadelphia. I was with my brother Tracy.

**LOC: If you hadn’t heard it before, I assume you have heard it since. What did you bring or try to bring to your version that isn’t in the earlier incarnation?**

CC: What I did to “The Twist” was a more upfront pop version with a back beat emphasizing more on the one and three rather than the two and four beats and the blues feeling that Hank Ballard & The Midnighters had on their version.

**LOC: While I doubt anyone could have predicted the stunning success and longevity of “The Twist,” at the time you recorded it, did you have a feeling that you had something special?**

CC: I asked my mother to pray to God and ask Him to give me a hit song and she said that she had a dream that I would record a song that would belong to someone else and it would cover the entire world. When I was asked to sing “The Twist,” I thought of what my mother had said. It's the only special feeling I got while recording [it].

**LOC: Can you tell me about recording session for “The Twist”? Where was it recorded, how long of a session did it take?**

CC: When I got to the studio, the tracks were already finished. All that the music needed was my voice. I sang the song four times. Dave Apple, who produced the recording, said “Chubby, that’ Daddy sleeping and Mama ain’t around’ is a little flat.” I said “Dave, I’m going home to do my homework. I think that my grades are in trouble and graduation is around the corner. They’ll never know.” Little did I know that “The Twist” would change the dance floor forever.

“The Twist” was recorded at 1405 Locust Street on the 9th floor. When all of the offices were empty, and all of the workers went home, we used the hallways as an echo chamber.

It took me less than 45 minutes to record “The Twist.”

**LOC: To what do you ascribe the enduring nature of both the single and the dance it inspired?**

CC: I think that people are addicted to simplicity. Keep it fun. Keep it stupid. Make sure it's a little sexy. “The Twist” has all of these elements.

“The Twist,” according to “Billboard” magazine, the Bible of the music industry, [is] the #1 song of all time from its “Hot 100 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary” list.

The 1958 portion of that award [belongs to] Hank Ballard and The Midnighters because I didn't record the song until late 1959 while in high school. The next time this event takes place will be 2063 and another song will be nominated for 50 years being the #1 song of all time. Until that day arrives, “The Twist” will be #1 for 105 years. “The Twist” is the #1 song of the 60's. “The Twist” is the first platinum [record] ever given to any artist and the only song to be #1 twice in recording history. “The Twist” changed the dance floor and it gave us "dancing apart to the beat," dancing together but not touching.